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Endau-Rompin: a Malaysian Heritage, edited by G.W.H. Davison. Malayan Nature Society, Kuala Lumpur. 221 p. (1988). No price given.
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In 1983 the Malayan Nature Society began planning an ambitious project: the Endau-Rompin Heritage and Scientific Expedition. Lasting 12 months during 1985 – 86, it involved the collaboration of hundreds of scientists and conservationists, and hundreds more students, government officials and other guests were invited to observe or take part. Its objectives were to survey the geology and biology of an extremely rich wilderness area straddling the border between the states of Pahang and Johor and help convince Malaysians of the urgency of saving this largely pristine area as peninsular Malaysia's second national park. I cannot imagine how anyone could remain unconvinced after looking through this splendidly produced volume. Many excellent scientists and photographers contributed to this book. Its 375 photos are of very high quality and the text, though simple and brief, is informative and interesting. The pictures dramatically testify to the fantastic biological diversity of the rain forests of Endau-Rompin and the beauty of its numerous inviting jungle streams and waterfalls. Most of these are drained by the Sungai Endau-Rompin which, studded with rocks, rapids and pools, winds it way out through this impressive forest into the lowlands.

Most of the shots are of plants and animals in their natural environment. Some of my favorites: the jewel frog, with red and orange spots and lines; the Malaysian horned toad, a specialistic in camouflage on the forest floor; the saprophytic *Thismia aseroe*, a tiny flowering plant with yellow 'tentacled' flowers; the endemc fan palm *Livistona endauensis*, which grows profusely on certain sandstone hilltops. Remarkably, the roots of several trees climb the trunk of this palm to obtain nutrients from the leaf litter in the crown, and a beautiful epiphytic clubmoss grows on it. A tiny land crab was found living in pitcher plants in boggy areas. The bizarre 'monkey's head plant,' an epiphytic shrub with huge swollen tubers whose chambers are occupied by ants, grows in specialized habitats.

Many new species were discovered by expedition members, including three African violet-like herbs, a tree frog, a trap-door spider. More than 12 new plants were discovered.

The aboriginal Orang Hulu live in permanent settlements in part of the area and use the forest to collect medicinal plants and many other products. More than 50 medicinal plants were indentified by these forest dwellers, whose uses include treatment for bruises, snakebites, toothache, bone fractures, malaria, diabetes, diarrhea, rheumatism, coughs, anemia, smallpox, while others serve as health tonics, aphrodisiacs or relate to contraception, pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal complications. Some of the these plants are used by Malaysians elsewhere, but most reported effects are unknown in modern medicine.

Mammals of the Endau-Rompin include the tiger, Malaysian tapir, elephant,

sambar, barking deer, mouse deer, bearded pig, dusky leaf monkey, banded leaf monkey and white-handed gibbon. Endau-Rompin also has largest population of Sumatran rhinoceros on the peninsula or mainland Southeast Asia, which is its major 'flagship species.'

The expedition was followed up by a scientific symposium in December 1986, and many of its findings have been published in the society's *Malayan Nature Journal.* It is hoped that surveys of the area will continue, as more scientists have an opportunity to visit the area. Probably most of the biological diversity of this rich tropical forest still remains to be identified. But as a beginning, one would have to rate the expedition as an unqualified success.

Establishment of Endau-Rompin as a national park was included in the Third Malaysia Plan, 1976 – 80, but in Malaysia creation of a national park requires legal action by the relevant state governments. This is the major reason why only a few national parks exist in that country. Both the governments of Pahang and Johor have agreed to the establishment of contiguous state parks, but the total area will be less than that proposed by the central goverment. The timber industry has also been active in the states, and over the years of negotiations the available forest area has gradually been whittled back. It is likely that the park when finally gazetted will contain around 900 square kilometers which is not very large, but it is nevertheless extremely worthwhile.

The editor and leaders of the Malayan Nature Society are to be congratulated for their efforts to achieve conservation of Endau-Rompin and for producing such a fine book in the process. I highly recommend it to all persons, conservationists or not (order from Malayan Nature Society, P.O. Box 10750, 50724 Kuala Lumpur).

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